

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, CVIS, BU
SUBJECT: DIVIDED FAMILY CASES: POSSIBLE TOUGHER BULGARIAN ATTITUDE

REF: SOFIA 0655

1. EMBASSY HAS LEARNED THAT MFA DETPUTY CHIEF OF CONSULAR DEPARTMENT, NIKOLAI KOVACHEV, RECENTLY INFORMED BOTH WEST GERMAN AND BRITISH EMBASSIES HERE THAT GOB CONSIDERS DIVIDED FAMILY CASES TO INCLUDE ONLY SPOUSES AND MINOR CHILDREN UNDER AGE OF SIXTEEN, AND SOMETIMES OLDER RETIRED PARENTS. THIS WOULD BE A CONSIDERABLE DEPARTURE FROM GOB'S PRESENT GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF OUR EMBASSY'S DIVIDED FAMILY CASES ON AN EXTENDED FAMILY BASIS--INCLUDING PARENTS, SIBLINGS, UNCLES AND AUNTS.

2. IN MID-MARCH, WEST GERMAN EMBOFF WAS CALLED IN TO SEE KOVACHEV CONCERNING SEVERAL PENDING CONSULAR ISSUES AND DURING CONVERSATION WAS INFORMED OF NEW GOB DEFINITION. IN EARLY APRIL, BRITISH EMBOFF CALLED ON KOVACHEV TO DISCUSS SEVERAL PENDING HUMANITARIAN CASES AND WAS TOLD OF GOB'S NEW RESTRICTIVE DEFINITION OF WHAT COMPRISED A DIVIDED FAMILY, LIMITING SUCH CASES TO SPOUSES AND MINOR CHILDREN. KOVACHEV ALSO TOLD BRITISH EMBOFF THAT DEFINITION APPLIED TO VISITOR CASES AS WELL AS TO THOSE INTENDING TO EMIGRATE.

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WHEN QUERIED BY BRITISH EMBOFF REGARDING CASES OF PARENTS WHO WERE ELDERLY AND RETIRED, KOVACHEV AVERRED THAT GOB COULD SOMETIMES CONSIDER SUCH CASES. KOVACHEV ADDED THAT ANY EXHIBITION OF "DISLOYALTY" TO BULGARIAN GOVERNMENT ON PART EITHER OF THE APPLICANT FOR A BULGARIAN PASSPORT OR OF HIS/HER SPONSOR ABROAD WOULD BE THE OVERRIDING FACTOR IN MINISTRY'S ADJUDICATION OF THE CASE.

3. EMBASSY CANNOT YET JUDGE WHETHER THIS REPRESENTS DELIBERATE GOB POLICY CHANGE OR ONLY A CONTINUATION OF KOVACHEV'S PROCLIVITY TO TRY TO KEEP WEST EMBASSIES OFF BALANCE REGARDING DIVIDED FAMILY ISSUES. IN ANY EVENT, AMBASSADOR PLANS TO GO AHEAD WITH INFORMAL PRESENTATION OF A LIST OF EMBASSY'S CURRENT DIVIDED FAMILY HARDSHIP CASES TO MFA WESTERN EUROPEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR GOTSEV (REFTEL). FOLLOWING THAT PRESENTATION WE HOPE TO HAVE CLEARER PICTURE OF PRESENT GOB ATTITUDE.
GARTHOFF

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